

SSG Peter Rimar



◀ **FALLEN FRIEND**

Somewhere Over the Atlantic

SGT Osvaldo Ortiz of the 82nd Airborne Division sleeps next to the transfer case and gear of a fallen friend aboard a C-17 Globemaster III bound for Dover Air Force Base, Del. Ortiz was accompanying the remains to the fallen soldier's home in Puerto Rico.

BRINGING AFGHANISTAN TO THE CLASSROOM ▶

Bethesda, Md.

“SUPPORTING Our Troops in Afghanistan” has developed into more than a service-learning project for a group of middle-schoolers.

Students at Westland Middle School in Bethesda, Md., started a project to create care packages for service members in Afghanistan, and it grew from there.

School principal Ursula Hermann suggested having service members talk about their experiences in Afghanistan. The 249th Engineer Battalion from Fort Belvoir, Va., was contacted and its executive officer, MAJ Steven Cade, agreed to participate in the students' activities.

In May Cade went to the school with CW3 Jason Carlo, SFC Kevin McCrea, SSG Nicholas Mapp and SPC Martin Brown. The soldiers briefed students on the culture of Afghanistan and displayed equipment they used while deployed.

Students asked about Afghanistan's climate and

LTC Jeffrey Bady



people. After the presentation, the students assembled care packages containing disposable razors, cameras, candy and other personal items.

The 249th Engr. Bn. provides utility power wherever needed around the globe. It has deployed to the Middle East, Asia, Africa and South America, and also supports the Federal Emergency Management Agency during disaster-relief efforts.

— LTC Jeffrey Bady, 81st Regional Support Command, Birmingham, Ala.

BIRTH OF A NATION? ►

Tallil Air Base, Iraq

It was not a mission the New Orleans, La.-based 377th Theater Support Command expected, but when word came from the U.S. State Department to plan the first conference for the future leaders of Iraq at Tallil Air base, the unit quickly responded.

While hostilities still continued in many parts of Iraq, the people responsible for forging a new government met in the shadows of the 4,000-year-old Temple of the Moon ziggurat near the ruins of Ur — the Biblical city that was the reputed birthplace of Abraham.

Organizers selected the site for its historical significance. “I can’t think of a better place to hold this conference than here, next to the birthplace of Abraham,” said BG Jack C. Stultz, deputy commander of the 377th and forward commander of the 143rd Transportation Command in Orlando, Fla.

The intent was to use local resources including caterers, limousines, shuttle busses, conference centers with breakout rooms and other amenities to make the leaders of the new government feel welcomed.

The problem was that in a country wracked by decades of war, including two major bombing campaigns in just over 10 years, no such niceties existed.

“The local shuttle buses were jalopies, from the 1930s or 1940s,” said MSG Donald McCrory. “The people requesting these supplies weren’t in Iraq. They didn’t know exactly what the situation was like.”

LTC Mike Ford said the troops on the ground could not come close to fulfilling the needs of the conference, so they turned to



the rear headquarters at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, where others quickly organized convoys to start movement of supplies needed to pull off the task.

Security was another issue as hostilities continued to rage near An Nasiriyah, just miles from the gate at Tallil. U.S. military personnel provided security during the setup and leading up to the actual conference, but then moved back to ensure the conference was viewed as an Iraqi event with little U.S. intervention.

The conference delegates were carefully selected and screened by State Department personnel. Only invited guests were allowed onto the grounds.

When the conference ended, delegates boarded busses to return home and continue the arduous task of forging a stable democracy in Iraq.

— CPT Bobby Hart, 143rd Trans. Cmd.

ENGINEER PLATOON ARRIVES IN AFRICA

Camp Lemonier, Djibouti

ARMY Reserve engineers from West Virginia have brought a new capability to Camp Lemonier, Djibouti, in support of Combined Joint Task Force–Horn of Africa’s mission of detecting, disrupting and defeating terrorism and preventing the re-emergence of terrorism in East Africa.

A key element in the task force’s counterterrorism mission is to make a difference in the lives of local people, said CPT Shawn P. McNabb, commander of the 463rd Engineer Detachment.

“One of the biggest ways we’re going to help with counterterrorism is showing the local people that we are here to help,” McNabb said.

McNabb said the soldiers can build just about anything the community needs, from schools and houses to beaches and roads. “About the only thing we can’t do is asphalt paving,” he said.

The engineers have brought a variety of skills and equipment to the task force, all of which are incorporated into one platoon with extensive heavy equipment.

The platoon, which includes masons, electricians and plumbers, focuses on constructing and outfitting houses, schools and other buildings.

The addition of such heavy equipment as bulldozers, dump trucks, graters and loaders adds to the ability to level terrain

and landscape construction sites. This means the task force can extend its already highly successful civil-military operations into more projects in more areas.

As CJTF-HOA transitions to the execution phase of operations, the engineers will play a vital role in the TF’s efforts to create a secure and stable environment, McNabb said.

“We get the opportunity to build things that will be here for years and that the people in the community will use,” he said. “For us, that is the most fulfilling part of the job.”

— SGT Matthew B. Roberson, CJTF-HOA
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